

AGE GROUP: 12 years and over

DIVISION: FORMS 1 to 4

SERIES: CURRENT AFFAIRS
PROGRAMME 6 BOUNDARIES OF GUIANA

SCRIPT BY:

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Narrator: Hello Boys and Girls,

You may have noticed that sometimes neighbours quarrel over fences. If you live in Georgetown or if you live in New Amsterdam you may not often hear quarrels about where the fence should be. But if you live in a country district it may be a very different story. As you know, children, in the country people often have large areas of land. And sometimes it's not easy to tell where one neighbour's land ends and where the other neighbour's land begins. Of course, there may be a fence. More often there's just a trench to separate them. But even the trench or the fence is no real proof of ^{land} where Mr. "A's" land ends and Mr. "B's" begins. You see, a fence or a trench can be in the wrong place. So the neighbours have to get surveyors to survey the land and very often they have to go to the Courts where the Judge will give his decision - saying where the fence ought to be.

Well, just as how neighbours have trenches and fences to separate their land, so countries have boundaries. I'm sure your teachers have already told you what a boundary is. Do you remember? Yes, it is the line which shows where the authority - or the right to rule - where the authority of one country ends and another country begins. You can see from this that a boundary is a most important thing. And countries, like ordinary neighbours, sometimes quarrel over boundaries. Sometimes they feel so strongly about their boundaries that they have actually gone to war over them.

/And.....

And you see, boys and girls, it's far more difficult to decide on the boundaries of a country than it is to decide about the fences between neighbours. Of course, sometimes, countries decide to use natural boundaries. Can you give me one example of a natural boundary? Yes, of course, a river. In many parts of the world rivers are used as boundaries. Your teachers can tell you of some of them. Usually the very centre of the river is looked upon as the dividing line. So on the right bank you may be in one country and on the left bank you may be in another. You know of course that the Corentyne River is the boundary between Guyana and Surinam - though your teachers will tell you that even the boundary on the Corentyne causes some trouble.

Unfortunately most boundaries are not rivers at all. Sometimes they are just imaginary lines running through land that is exactly the same on either side of the boundary. Sometimes it is even worse than this. A boundary line may run through dense forests where hardly anyone has even been. There are no settlements - there are no frontier guards and so on. Some parts of the boundary of Guyana are exactly like that. And you may find two countries claiming the same bit of land. And I'll tell you an odd thing - sometimes you may find two maps printed in two neighbouring countries and when you look at them closely you find both maps having the same piece of land as belonging to two countries at once!

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MUSIC BREAK

Narrator: Well, right now there's difference of opinion between Guyana and Venezuela over the boundary line between the two countries. The Venezuelans claim that fifty thousand square miles of Guyana really belongs to them. Now just think for a moment. Guyana is eighty-three thousand square miles, isn't it? Well, if Venezuela ought to have fifty thousand square miles then

our country will become very much smaller than it is now. But it isn't only becoming smaller that matters, children. Suppose there are precious or useful metals below the surface of the land that Venezuela is claiming. Then if the land were passed over to Venezuela, Guyana would lose all of this. So you see the Venezuelan claim is quite a serious thing.

But how has it happened that Venezuela is claiming so much of our own land? To answer that question we have to look back a bit. As far back as eighty-six years ago, that ^{was} ~~is~~ in 1877, Venezuela complained to the United States of America that Great Britain was pushing the boundary of Guyana further and further into Venezuelan land. And so like the neighbours I told you about ~~the Boundary of Guyana~~, both Venezuela and Great Britain decided to take the matter before a Court. But this couldn't be an ordinary Court in either country, could it? Oh no! It had to be what ~~is~~ ^{was} called an international court - that is, a Court where the Judges came from a number of Nations. The Judges in fact came from Britain, the United States of America and Russia. You see boys and girls, an international court is one way of settling disputes without going to war - and neither Venezuela nor Great Britain wanted war over the Boundary of Guyana.

In 1899 this international court gave its decision. And the decision was that of the fifty thousand square miles claimed by both countries, forty-five thousand should go to Guyana.

Now Venezuela has never been happy about the decision. So Venezuela has raised the question again. You see, it wants the whole matter settled once and for all before Great Britain hands over all her authority to this country. Last year, the Venezuelans took the matter to the United Nations; And the people at the U.N. who deal with this sort of thing have asked representatives of Great Britain and Venezuela to meet and discuss the matter.

/But.....

But do you remember I said that boundaries are not easy things to discuss? For one thing you have to get a whole team of people digging up old maps and old treaties, and so on. It's very surprising to hear that both sides are using an old map made in the year 1596! - And some old Dutch maps which were drawn in the early 17th Century are also being used. In fact all of a sudden history has become very important - for without it this whole problem could never be dealt with at all.

Last week the Conference began between Venezuela and Great Britain over the boundary question. And I hope you will keep on the look out for what will happen. For whatever is the decision, it will be of very great importance for the future of Guyana.

So long children until next week.

OPR:

PLAY THEME